

*Washington, DC* – Following final passage of the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act Conference Report, Congressman John Hall (D-NY19) issued the following statement:

"Tonight's vote marked an important milestone in the effort to change course in Iraq. I have opposed the war in Iraq since its start and tonight I was proud to vote for a responsible timeline to redeploy troops from Iraq and to refocus on Afghanistan. The President should reconsider his veto threat and listen to the American people in their demand for a new direction."

The full text of Congressman Hall's statement follows:

"Tonight's vote marked an important milestone in the effort to change course in Iraq. The United States Congress is sending to President Bush precisely what the American people have called for: a change of course in Iraq, a timeline for withdrawal, and urgently needed accountability from an administration that has demanded for far too long an open-ended commitment of American troops and lives to a country that does not want us there."

"The benchmarks in this legislation are those established by President Bush and Prime Minister Maliki, and are consistent with the recommendations of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group. Congress speaks for the American people when we say no more blank checks for Iraq."

"I have opposed the war in Iraq since its start and tonight I was proud to vote for a responsible timeline to redeploy troops from Iraq and to refocus on Afghanistan. This conference report makes it possible for the military to focus its resources where they should be: on Osama bin Laden, whose organization attacked the nation on 9/11, and destroying Taliban and Al Qaeda bases of operations in Afghanistan."

"As a member of the Veterans Affairs Committee, the increase in funding for military and veterans' health care contained in this measure as well as equipment to protect our troops is especially important to me. The Democratic Majority has provided more than \$5 billion to ensure that returning troops and veterans receive the health care that they have earned with their service."

"The President should reconsider his veto threat and listen to the American people in their demand for a new direction for Iraq."